

Speech of Jennifer Davis Carey
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for the Conference: *Aging of Massachusetts:*
Inherent Challenges & Opportunities
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Good morning. Thank you for joining us here today. As we begin, I would like to thank my staff at Executive Office of Elder Affairs for the untiring work of the past few months in putting this day together. I would also like to thank our sponsors whose support has made this conference possible. Very special thanks to our presenters who have graciously offered to allow us to pick their brains and for sharing their time, ideas and expertise with us.

Under Governor Romney's tenure, Elder Affairs has evolved from one of the smallest Secretariats in state government to one of the largest. With the addition of the Medicaid Long Term Care portfolio and the move of the office into the ambit of Health and Human Services, for the first time, policy, program, fiscal decisions and advocacy on behalf of the seniors of our state rests within a single entity. My staff works daily to serve the needs of current elders in the areas of health care, social supports, and protective services. They also serve the needs of caregivers; work collaboratively with

other agencies across state government and partner with colleagues in the private sector to address the needs of elders.

Driving our work and focus on today's elders is the concept of ***Community First***. Community First is an overarching philosophy as well as a set of policies and practices designed to allow today's seniors to age in place in the communities across our state that they have helped to build and in which they have spent the better part of their lives in. Community First is also a philosophy that we believe will continue to evolve and to allow to us to serve effectively the next generation of seniors. However, a Community First policy and the work of government alone are not, and will not, be sufficient. Serving that next generation of seniors will require us to re-tool and refine our current portfolio of services. Serving the next group of elders will also require new partnerships, new systems and new structures. The next generation of seniors is distinctive in many ways and their interests, needs, concerns, and preferences will drive change in almost every aspect of our common life.

They are the children of the Greatest Generation. Born between 1946 and 1964 they were babes in arms or small children during the Truman,

Eisenhower, Kennedy, or Johnson administrations. They are collectively known as the “*Baby Boomers*.” As a group, they are 77 million strong and the first of their numbers will reach age sixty on January 1st 2006.

As a cohort, the Boomers have witnessed some of the most significant social change in our nation’s history. They have benefited from some of the most rapid advances in health care in human history. They were born into a world where technological advances have been swift and impact pervasive. They have seen American business change from the dominance of the corner store to the dominance of global markets.

In the 1950s, some watched as fathers, older brothers, cousins, or uncles took up arms and headed to Korea. In the summers, their mother’s watched anxiously, fearing that the scourge of polio would touch their lives. They witnessed a Cold War declared between the West and the Soviet Bloc. They mastered the hula hoop and watched Rin Tin Tin. A nascent Civil Rights Movement held a nation accountable to the values it expressed and fought for overseas. Something called rock and roll was fueling sales in record shops across the nation. A Supreme Court case struck down eighty years of legally sanctioned apartheid opening doors for millions. As the

decade progressed the Boomers viewed heady images of a cross racial mandate to move the nation forward as evidenced by linked arms singing “We Shall Overcome”, of Life, Look, Ebony, and Time magazine photographs of massive marches on Washington and a presidential address calling forth a “Great Society.” Children lined up in schools for cups of polio vaccine that were distributed ending that annual fear. Families sat riveted to their black and white televisions as a rocket blasted into space to orbit our planet and a “space race” with the Russians began. They mimicked Walter Cronkhite’s “and that’s the way it is”

Optimism infused the nation as one decade changed to another. A young president offered a challenge to those Boomers just coming of age, “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” Youthful enthusiasm and idealism were captured and directed through a new concept for service called “The Peace Corps.” New nations were born in Africa and the Caribbean. A group of young men with hair touching their collars jetted in from England and took the nation by storm transforming popular music forever and giving Ed Sullivan *agita*. A booming economy absorbed legions of new workers in traditional and burgeoning fields. An emphasis on research in science and technology

created the outlandish dream that one day a computer would be able to fit into a single 8x10 foot office. *The Beverly Hillbillies* (actually an allegory of the Jeffersonian agrarian ideal represented by the Clampetts, in conflict with a more Hamiltonian notion of urban elites, represented by the Drysdale,) ruled the TV-Land.

A jungle war raged in Southeast Asia. Four little girls were killed in a church bombing in Alabama. A sense of urgency grew among the Boomers and the nation as the images began to change. Families mourned as young men and women failed to return from Southeast Asia, or returned disabled in mind or body. A nation mourned as three leaders, John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Bobby Kennedy, three who for many embodied the best and the promise of our nation, were taken. A political convention captured the news not for the official proceedings, but for the riot outside, and new phrases found their way into the papers – hippies, yippies, and black power, flower power, tie dye, granola. A heart was successfully transplanted saving the life a man with just days to live. A concert in a small dairy town in upstate New York became the symbol of the times. A six-day war in the Middle East would set the stage for an ongoing set of

international concerns. President Nixon went to China and had a cameo on *Laugh-In*.

Ladies burned their foundation garments in symbolic protest of their exclusion from power and opportunity. Many grooved to the tunes of Motown. Watergate took on meaning beyond just a massive piece of real estate in D.C. Jerry Rubin took a job on Wall Street. Tom Hayden became an elected official. Concern about the degradation of natural resources gave birth to the environmental movement. OPEC was formed. Microsoft was founded. Mark Spitz won seven gold medals in the Olympics. Saturday Night Live began its run. Calculators become ubiquitous. Disco reigned and many boogied to the tune of “*Night on Disco Mountain*.” Ronald Reagan became President. And the eighties and nineties flew by as the Boomers immersed themselves in career and family.

These were the seminal events and important trends that shaped the lives and informed the perspective of those born between 1946 and 1964 -- the Boomer Generation, the Sandwich Generation, the Me Generation, and the Woodstock Generation. They are the most well educated cohort in our nation’s history. They are one of the most well resourced cohorts in our

nation's history. They are one of the most diverse cohorts in our nation's history, by any measure. Their expectations, preferences, needs, wants, and sheer numbers have effected every American institution --education, health care, religion, government, community life, and the workplace. And, now that they are entering the next phase of their lives, they will transform the meaning of *aging*. That is what brings us here today.

At today's conference, *The Aging of Massachusetts: Inherent Challenges & Opportunities*, leading edge thinkers from across the nation, from government and the private and non-profit sectors, have assembled to discuss and identify challenges and opportunities facing the aging of this generation and how this massive population shift will affect our lives. We will discuss the impact of this cohort on business and the workplace as the Sandwich generation continues to wrestle with issues of care giving and as workers and businesses plan for changes as the Boomers begin to retire. We will consider Civic Engagement and discuss whether the "Me generation" will hear the echo of the challenge made by that President so long ago. We will talk about community living the implications and evolution of our Community First policy. And we will explore the implications of longer lives, coupled with the importance of sustained cognitive health, chronic

disease management and the need for individuals to prepare fiscally for the final third of their lives.

We have an exciting and busy day planned. To get us started on our work, I would like to introduce someone I am proud and pleased to work for, my boss, Governor Mitt Romney.

